

Eccentric Eccentrics

by Michelle Laging

Oh, the weather outside is frightful...

The air is getting cooler, the leaves have fallen and the first frost has come and gone. Even though it's difficult to exercise when the weather changes, it's still important! Now is the time to discover some fun and creative ways to incorporate exercise into your routine during the colder months.

~ Eccentric Eccentrics ~

Eccentric exercise is a technical name for the overall lengthening of the muscle that occurs as it develops tension and contracts to control motion against the resistance of an outside force.** They are a great way to enhance your workout because they cause your muscles to produce more force while they contract!

*** Kisner and Colby in Therapeutic Exercise: Foundations and Techniques*

Turn on some upbeat music, grab some free weights and try out the following resistance-based exercises. Try to do each exercise for the length of a song, about 3 minutes or so. Incorporate these exercises into your regimen for some more variety.

~ Squats ~

Squat down (pretend you are going to sit in a chair) with hand-weights at your side. Feel the weight shift into your heels and engage your abdominal muscles. Your knees should track right above your feet . . . so don't let them wander to one side or the other!

Eccentricity 1:
1 count down,
3 counts up will focus on the hamstrings.

Eccentricity 2:
3 counts down,
1 count up will target the quadriceps.



~ Flye ~

Lie on your back. Align your shoulder, elbow and wrist joints so your big knuckles face toward the ceiling. Palms should face toward each other in the midline. Keeping a soft bend in the elbows, guide your arms out to the side. Bring them back in to the starting position (as if you are giving someone a big hug).

Eccentricity:
3 counts down,
1 count up.



~ Dead Lifts ~

Start this exercise by standing up. Keep your back flat and abdominal muscles engaged, hinge forward from the hips. Maintain a soft bend in the knees and allow your weights to come down to the knees (NO FARTHER!). With control, unhinge back up to the starting position.

Eccentricity:
3 counts down,
1 count up.



~ Bicep Curls ~

Standing nice and tall, imagine that your elbows are glued against your sides. With the palm leading, bend the elbow and bring the weight up toward your shoulder. Control the movement and bring the weight back down to the starting position.

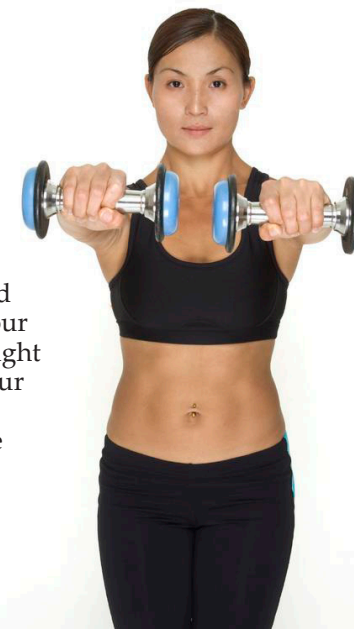
Eccentricity:
1 count up,
3 counts down.



~ Tricep Extensions ~

Lie on your back. Similar to the flye exercise, line up your shoulder, elbow and wrist joints so your big knuckles face toward the ceiling (as if you were going to punch the ceiling). The palms of your hands should be facing downward, toward your feet. Bend ONLY your elbows and bring the weight straight down toward your head. With control, bring the weight back up to the starting position.

Eccentricity:
3 counts down,
1 count up.



~ Abdominal Crunches ~

Put the weights aside and lie on your back. Rest your hands behind your head, elbows out to the side. Keep space between your chin and your chest (imagine that there is an apple there . . . don't make applesauce!). Use your abdominal muscles to raise ONLY your arms and shoulder blades off of the floor. With the abdominal muscles still engaged, control your descent.

Eccentricity:
1 count up,
3 counts down.



Cardiovascular exercise is just as important as resistance-based exercise. By doing each of these exercises for about 3 minutes, you'll have a great base for a cardiovascular workout. However, if you're looking for a bit more, dust off your library card, gather some girlfriends and head to your local library. Search through the fitness DVD's for a variety of options. Yoga/pilates, step aerobics, kickboxing and dance routines will really spice things up. There are always a ton of old VHS's from the 80's that are sure to make you laugh. For a more exciting time, dress up in your leg warmers and tie your hair up with a neon colored scrunchie. Designate a girlfriend's house to meet at each week. Make sure that you have room to move around without placing valuable items in peril (a basement might be best).

~ Cheers to a healthy lifestyle!